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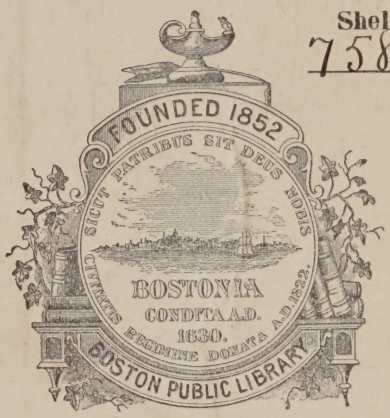

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ABBOTT'S

LECTURE ON THE LICENSE LAW.

BOSTON:
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52 Washington Street.

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LECTURE

ON THE

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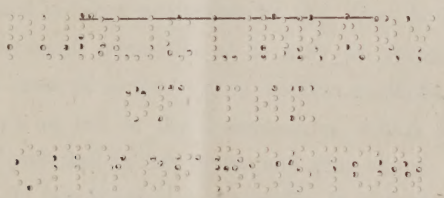
LICENSE LAW.

BY JOHN S. C. ABBOTT,

PASTOR OF THE ELIOT CHURCH, ROXBURY, MASS.



BOSTON:

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LECTURE.

At the last session of the Massachusetts Legislature, a law was passed prohibiting the sale of ardent spirits throughout the Commonwealth, in quantities less than fifteen gallons. But as the article may occasionally be needed in small quantities, for medicinal purposes, the law makes provision for the licensing of an apothecary for its sale in each small town, and where the town is large for licensing one to each two thousand inhabitants.

Thus no restraint is put upon the traffic in the article as it is used in large quantities in the arts, or for its purchase in small quantities as it may be occasionally needed in cases of sickness or of sudden accident. But the law puts an end to the dram-selling, which has so long been practised in bar rooms and grog shops.

By the old law regulating the traffic in ardent spirits, and which this has superseded, the sale of the article was prohibited in all quantities less than twenty-eight gallons, unless a license for the retail sale was granted by the select men of the town, or the commissioners of the

county. They granted, or refused licenses to sell, as to them seemed best.

In several of the counties the inhabitants had become so fully impressed with a sense of the evils of these bar rooms and grog shops, that they had elected temperance county commissioners, and instructed them to grant no licenses. Thus in the counties of Barnstable, Bristol, Dukes, Nantucket, Norfolk and Plymouth, the retail traffic has been entirely prohibited, and no ardent spirits could be legally purchased in those counties, in quantities less than twenty eight gallons.

The reason why the quantity allowed to be sold was reduced from twenty eight gallons to fifteen, was because that number of gallons is often sold in kegs, and is accordingly the limit recognized in the revenue laws of the United States. And as the object of the new license law, is only to prevent the public exposure of liquors for sale in small quantities, the end is perfectly answered by allowing the sale in those quantities in which the laws of the United States permit the importation.

The perfect constitutionality of the law, it would seem hardly possible seriously to question. When the power of Congress, in this particular, is expressly and carefully limited to the 'regulation of commerce with foreign nations and among the several States'—that is, between one State and another; when it has been decided by the Supreme Court, that the '*internal commerce* of a State may be considered as reserved for the State itself;' when it has long been the undisputed decision in the most

authoritative commentary upon our laws, that the control of the United States Congress 'does not comprehend any commerce between man and man in a single State;' when time out of mind we have been living under laws regulating the traffic in ardent spirits, declaring in what quantities ardent spirits may be sold, and who may, and who may not sell them; when this regulating the internal traffic has been practised by perhaps every other State in the Union, with no one questioning its constitutionality; when we have laws regulating the sale of gunpowder, and prohibiting the sale of lottery tickets, and forbidding men to hazard their own property in games of chance;—to assert, in the face of all these well-known facts, that the State of Massachusetts has no constitutional right to regulate the sale of a poisonous drug, which is doing more than all other causes combined to fill the State with crime, and pauperism and wo, is an assertion which no sober man can seriously respect.

The constitutional correctness of the principle on which the new license law is based, is, in fact, universally admitted. For those who are so strenuously opposing the new law, prohibiting the sale in quantities less than *fifteen gallons*, approve of the old law, which in six counties of the State, prohibits the sale in quantities less than *twenty-eight gallons*. For they expressly declare, in their appeal to the public, that 'it is the great object of their efforts to obtain the repeal of the new, and the re-enacting of the old license law.'

Now by the old law the right of the Legislature to regulate or to prohibit the public exhibition of ardent spirits for retail, is fully recognized. It is the very basis on which the old law rests. Their power to *regulate* it they exercised at once for the whole commonwealth; their power to *prohibit* it they delegated to the 'select men,' and to the county commissioners; so that the people of the several towns and counties might decide, each for themselves, whether ardent spirits should be retailed within their limits or not. As public sentiment became gradually enlightened, one county after another exercised the right of prohibition thus delegated by the Legislature, until it was excluded from six out of the fourteen counties of the State. And by this time the salutary effects of this policy had become so generally evident, that a large majority of the Legislature were prepared to adopt itself the system of prohibition for the whole State. Here are no new principles of legislation adopted—no new powers assumed; but only a policy which the Legislature had before authorized the different sections of the State to adopt, each for itself—it now, in a more advanced and well-informed state of public sentiment, adopts once for all.

As to the charge of *partiality* in its operation, which has sometimes been brought against the law, if such a charge is to be made at all, it must be made against the old law, rather than the new; for this, in consequence of the varying states of public opinion in different sections of the commonwealth, resulted in a great want of

uniformity in its operations in the different towns and counties. To sell ardent spirits by retail was either legally innocent, or else a criminal offence, according as a man was on the north or south bank of a river, or upon one side or another of a town line. The new law, on the other hand, is as general, uniform and impartial in its operation, as it is just in principle, and humane and salutary in its effects.

If the present license law be clearly promotive of the best interests of the commonwealth, the State, by the majority of its voters, has not merely an undoubted right, but must feel the pressure of an imperious duty to enact and sustain the law. It is on this point, then, after all, that the great question arises. Here the advocates and opponents of the law join issue.

The one say the law is clearly for the public interest, and therefore should be sustained.

The other say the law is clearly not for the public interest, and therefore should be repealed.

Here then we have the simple question upon which we are to form our judgment, and according to which judgment, we are individually to act.

And we ought not to forget that so far as we are exposed to any improper bias in forming our opinions on this subject, the influence of such bias is altogether against the law; for some portion of the community have a strong pecuniary interest in its repeal, while no one can have any motive for wishing to sustain it, except an honest conviction that it is conducive to the public good.

Let us first then look at its influence upon the community at large. That a sober community—a community abstaining from alcoholic drinks, will be more industrious and intelligent and happy, than a community in which these articles are freely used, is a question as conclusively settled as any question can be. Look at any town in the heart of our Commonwealth. Here, for example, is a rich farming town, containing a few thousand inhabitants. Their peaceful dwellings are scattered over its hills and vallies, and they obtain an ample support from the cultivation of their fertile soil. In the centre of the town there is a blacksmith's shop, a wheelwright's, and one or two groceries. To this centre, the farmers and their sons are, almost every week, necessarily resorting to have their tools repaired, and to obtain family supplies.

Now there are two plans proposed to promote the temperance and sobriety of this town. For be it remembered that they who are unfriendly to the new license law, oppose it in their published appeal, expressly upon the ground of its unfavorable influence upon the cause of temperance. The one plan, then, as publicly promulgated and soberly argued, is to place in each of these stores a few hogsheads of brandy, gin, whisky and rum ;—to place behind the counter a man who considers it for his interest to sell all he possibly can, and to induce every one to buy in quantities both great and small. It would present freely to the young men who meet at these shops, every temptation and facility for treating each other to

what is called a cheerful glass, till cheerfulness swells into merriment, and merriment is lost in rioting and carousing. And as the exciting and besotted appetite becomes confirmed, and the eye grows dim, and the limbs totter, and the mind is enfeebled in all its moral powers, they would still allow the glittering decanter to lure the eye, and the diffused effluvia of ardent spirits to rouse the now resistless appetite of the impotent and captivated victim.

The only obstacle they would allow to be interposed to this downward career is the power of one's own moral strength to resist temptation. In the adjoining church you may deliver your temperance lectures, and among these dwellings you may scatter your pathetic appeals. But you must not raise your finger to seal the *tap* of the rum barrel, you must by no means shut out any of the physical temptations to this vice. All the allurements and excitements of this terrible appetite must be left to their own natural operation. As one after another falls before this almost irresistible temptation; as the bright promise of the youthful bridal is converted into haggard wretchedness and remediless woe; as family after family is transferred to the almshouse; as occasional midnight brawls and fearful crimes harrow the moral feelings of the community, they must still allow this unfailing fountain of poverty and crime to remain unsealed. It must stand in the very heart of their lovely town, with its strong temptation for the young, with the absolute certainty of its being the loitering place of the indolent

and the dissolute, and continually holding up to the intemperate that excitement of appetite and that strong inducement to drunkenness which their enfeebled moral powers are utterly unable to resist.

Need we appeal to *imagination* to tell what the consequence must be? Does not almost every town in New England tell us, with its glaring facts? Has not the result been written in ineffaceable letters on the almshouse, and the impoverished farm and the windowless dwellings, in murders and homicides and every nameless crime; in the blighting and withering of woman's heart; in the ragged and half starved and uneducated children, growing up more miserable and hopeless than even the wild offspring of a respectable savage! Need we appeal to imagination to tell us the effect of the village grog shop upon the village morals?

Now this is the way in which some of our fellow citizens say the cause of temperance is to be promoted. Leave the nuisance of the village grog shop unabated. Let the labelled hogsheads of Brandy, Gin, Whisky and Rum stand there, emitting their fumes to catch the sense and excite the desire of every passing toper, ready for the immediate gratification of every transient appetite. They would allow the temptation to be spread every where, and leave only self-resolution to contend against it. And this they say, is the best way in which to promote the cause of temperance.

The overwhelming majority of our last legislature came to the deliberate conclusion that this was not a good way

to promote temperance. They accordingly adopt a different plan. They go to the grocers in this village centre and say to them, your liquor sale is ruining the prosperity of our town. We have watched the effect of this sale for many years. It has already destroyed many of our most promising young men ; it has been the utter and hopeless ruin of some of our most valuable and happy families ; it is now rapidly hurrying along the dark path of poverty and disease, to the grave, many whom it has already made confirmed sots ; and we see others, who, through its daily temptation, are passing with most fearful rapidity, from positions of respectability and usefulness to the depths of penury and disgrace. It lays upon our town a most oppressive tax, for the support of those families who, in consequence of this traffic, have become paupers. In this sale we see evil and only evil and that continually. It must now be stopped. The peace and prosperity of our town, the safety of ourselves and our children imperatively demand it.

The change must be, we all know, immediate and wonderful. Some, who were before considered as entirely lost in drunkenness, now, delivered from temptation, are restored to virtue ; their scattered families are again gathered together ; and the smile once more beams upon the cheek of the wan and wasted wife ; the fire again blazes cheerfully upon the long desolate hearth, and that God, who welcomes the returning prodigal even from his herding with the swine, looks down upon them with his blessing.

Others who were fast travelling to ruin,—who had already acquired a relish for the malignant poison, are saved—their reputation, their property, their families are saved.

The young, unexposed to the temptation, unallured by the vice, grow up with vigorous minds and healthy bodies, and their beaming countenances tell that there is within them the glow of unperverted moral feelings.

Who now hears the midnight cry of riotous carousings? Who now sees the bloated and degraded gang of loiterers at the village store? Quietness reigns there. The hand of industry spreads nameless charms over all those fields and dwellings. There is no temptation to intemperance and there is consequently free scope for the expansion of industry and virtue. Lyceums are established; libraries circulate; and the almshouse is deserted.

Now can any one in sober seriousness doubt the salutary effect of this measure? Can any one really believe that the happiness of that village would be promoted by having the rum bottle and the glass standing upon the counters of those stores, to lure the eye and stimulate the thirst of each one who enters, and to provoke immediate gratification?

The same that is true of the country village is true of the crowded street of the city. You may go from the heart of Worcester county to the heart of Broad street, and in each place, the removal of the inducements to intemperance, in the glittering show of the dram shop, will

be the removal of the most fruitful source of poverty and suffering. You may go from the filthy bar room of the most miserable tavern, which ever deformed and disgraced our land, to the marble counter and the splendid Bacchanalian apparatus, of the most magnificent city hotel, and in each place, the removal of the allurement to indulgence, will be the salvation of youthful sobriety, and the promoter of wide spread public good.

It is in vain for any of us to claim exemption from the necessity of this safeguard. It will not do for the Clergyman to say he needs it not. For how many in that calling, which at least ought to be a sacred one, have fallen before this destroyer! And how many an aged servant in the gospel, is now, in his grey hairs, mourning and refusing to be comforted because his son is a drunkard?

It will not do for those of you, who are rich, to say we need it not. Where are the sons of our rich men? And where did so many of them acquire those appetites, which have led them through all the variegations of disgrace to besotted ruin? It was in the convivialities of the spirit vending hotel.

It will not do for those of you who are learned, to say, in our mental culture we have an antidote! Is it uncommon to hear of the distinguished lawyer or physician or statesman that he is ruining himself by strong drink? And are we not sometimes pointed to drunkards in the streets, and told that they are the sons of the most distinguished men in the land?

It will not do for the poor man to say I need it not. Your son is perhaps the only staff of your declining days, and when that staff is broken, you are afflicted indeed.

This purification of our State is necessary for us all. We all, the whole community need it. It is needful for us, and our children and all the best interests of our Commonwealth. If we would have in our honored State intelligence and industry and thrift; if we would have the soil well cultivated; the villages beautiful and each fireside encircled by a happy group of affectionate hearts; if we would have quiet sabbaths and empty almshouses and tenantless gaols, we must put the ban of legal reprobation upon the sale of rum—we must expel that Satan from our Eden;—we must one and all resolve, that for the sake of ourselves and our children we will purify the land.

But perhaps some one replies, if the rich need this restraint as well as the poor, why not have a law which will operate upon them as well as upon the poor. The rich man, it is said, can easily purchase his fifteen gallons, and take it to his house, and drink it at his leisure; but the poor man is unable to purchase so large a quantity, and therefore is oppressed.

New England rum, the common drink of laboring men who drink at all, sells at about forty cents a gallon. Fifteen gallons would therefore amount to six dollars. There are not very many of us so very poor but that we could raise that sum, if we felt greatly the need of our fifteen gallons. And then again, nothing is more common,

in this age of associated effort, than for a few persons to unite for the accomplishment of an important undertaking. If three neighbors unite, the fifteen gallons will cost them two dollars apiece. Now if a man is so poor that he cannot raise two dollars, I submit the question, if his family do not probably need food and clothing more than *New England rum.*

And then, again, there is another view to be taken of this oppression of the poor. The common price for a glass of New England rum, at a country grog shop, is three cents. There are sixty-four glasses in a gallon. Consequently the poor man pays one dollar and ninety-two cents for a gallon of rum, as he drinks it, by the glass, at the store. At the country tavern, he often pays six cents a glass. And there the gallon costs him three dollars and eighty-four cents. Under this new license law the gallon can cost him but forty cents. Thus there is a clear saving to him of one dollar and fifty-two cents in the one case, and of three dollars and forty-four cents in the other, upon every gallon he uses. The poor man thus obtains nine gallons, for absolutely less money, than a single gallon costs him, as he drinks at the bar room of the country tavern.

Who is it then who feels this oppression? Is it the poor man who buys, or the rich liquor vender who sells? May not this be the reason why such deep commiseration for the poor is so unexpectedly awakened in every bar room and grog shop in Massachusetts. We can no longer sell rum to the poor man at one dollar and ninety-

two cents a gallon, i. e. considerably more than four hundred per cent. profit, says the keeper of the grog shop. And we, says the keeper of the bar room, can no longer reap the profits of selling it to him at three dollars and eighty-four cents a gallon, i. e, at more than nine hundred per cent. profit. Is not this the honest meaning of the phrase, you are oppressing the poor?

Oppressing the poor to close the dram shop! Why who needs to be told that the poor never had a more terrible oppressor, a more relentless tyrant than the dram shop. These are the very manufactories of poverty. Last year there were in the almshouse in Boston, two thousand paupers, made such by dram drinking. And it is just so with the overwhelming majority in every almshouse in the State. And who can tell the number of families, which, by the same cause, were kept in hopeless wretchedness, just able to live, day after day, in a state of semi starvation, half clothed and half frozen. Go through the State of Massachusetts and ask every intelligent man, woman and child, what is the greatest scourge of the poor in New England, and throughout our whole country, and there will be but one answer; and it will come in tones as emphatic as the thunders of Heaven. It is the dram shop—the dram shop—which more than any thing and every thing else, is the scourge of the poor. Were it not for these our native population would hardly know the name of poverty.

Said a poor woman, a day or two since, "tomorrow my woes begin again, for my husband returns from the

House of Correction!" She was a poor woman, supporting by her hard toil, a family of little children. And her only respite from personal violence, and from the robbery of her own scanty earnings to be squandered in the dram shop, was when her husband was in the house of Correction. And is it oppressing this poor woman and her worse than fatherless babes to shut up the dram shop?

And her husband, her brutal husband, brutalized by rum; is it oppressing him, to save him from the resistless temptation? He has wept bitterly over his fall. He has promised and promised again to amend. For a fortnight at a time he has again and again summoned every particle of resolution left with him, to overcome the deadly appetite, and even the effluvia of the grog shop would sweep it all away in temptation's hour, and he is left wallowing in the mire.

And now this miserable woman says to the children, tomorrow our woes commence anew, for your father is coming home. *And gentlemen tell you that you are oppressing the poor by closing the grog shop!*

But perhaps some one triumphantly replies, according to the statement but just now made, the new license law must be injurious to the cause of temperance, for if persons cannot buy ardent spirits by retail at the country tavern, they will buy it in quantities, and they can obtain in that way vastly more spirit for the same money, and consequently will use more.

But this is not the effect. For although they buy at an immense disadvantage at retail stores and taverns, they

would, for obvious reasons, buy very little if this mode of supply were cut off. The great efficiency of the law consists in its removing the temptation presented by the public exposure of liquors exhibited in small quantities for the retail sale.

So that while this reasoning shows most conclusively the gross absurdity of the assertion that the poor man is oppressed, and while it fully explains to us the secret of those compassionate bewailings of the oppression of the poor, which have come in such pathetic tones from all the ware houses of strong drink—it is still most undeniably true, that shutting out the retail trade from the grog shops and the bar rooms, will do more than all things else to arrest the progress of intemperance.

Who needs to be told that men do not become intemperate in solitude,—that it is the temptation and excitement of the store and the bar, which first engenders the depraved appetite, and then by continued renewal, strengthens and confirms it. Men do not naturally love rum. They are led to taste by invitations and persuasions at the retail counter. Remove these fruitful temptations and men will soon cease to buy at all. They will acquire no taste for the destructive poison, and soon the traffic in the article as an habitual drink will cease forever. If this new law is well sustained, in a few years drunkenness will almost totally disappear from among us, and Massachusetts, redeemed and purified, will beam forth as the most brilliant luminary in our national constellation.

But it is not necessary for us to attempt to guess what the operation of this law will be, for the effect has been fairly tried in six counties of the State, and in some of these for several years. The last legislature appointed a committee carefully to investigate the result produced in these counties by the refusal to grant licenses. After a long and elaborate investigation, a great number of witnesses having been examined, the committee reported, that—

"The evidence was perfectly incontrovertible, that the good order, the physical and moral welfare of the community had been promoted, by refusing to license the sale of ardent spirits, and that the consumption of spirits has been very greatly diminished in all instances by the refusal to grant licenses; and that, although the laws have been and are violated to some extent, in different places, the practice soon becomes disreputable and hides itself from the public eye, by shrinking away into obscure and dark places; that noisy and tumultuous quarrels cease, where licenses are refused; that pauperism has very rapidly diminished from the same cause."

How can any one, in view of such facts, still assert that dram selling is promotive of the public good?

But let us turn from the consideration of this law, as it operates upon the general welfare, to more specific cases.

A year or two since, as I was passing a sabbath in a country town, in the interior of the Commonwealth, I was requested to visit a dying woman. The first aspect of the house to which I was led, in its loose clapboards and broken windows, and decayed fences, told me I was ap-

proaching the home of a drunkard. The apartment, in which the dying woman was breathing her last, was one whose aspect of cheerlessness and discomfort made the heart to ache. A few wretched articles of furniture were scattered about the room, and upon a low bed, in one corner, most scantily furnished, lay the wasted form of the dying. Her countenance bore the traces of intelligence, of refinement, and yet of the most overwhelming mental anguish. Her husband stood at the head of the bed, with an expression of as deep grief as could be crowded into the features of a bloated inebriate. Five little children stood around the bed-side, loudly sobbing; the eldest a daughter not twelve years of age, kneeling by her mother's side, and almost convulsively clasping her hand as she drenched it with her tears.

It was one of those scenes of wo, which at once paints itself upon the eye, and imprints itself upon the mind—never, never to be effaced. From the few almost inarticulate words of the dying woman, I gathered that all the anguish of the mother's heart was in fevered excitement, as she was to leave her poor children—her tender boys and girls, in this world of temptation, with no guide but their besotted, drunken father.

She was already breathing her last as I entered—and, in a short time, her struggling, broken, grief-rent heart, was still in death.

I inquired into the circumstances of the case, and found that a few years before, this woman, then a young lady of many accomplishments of person and of mind, was

married to her husband, then a young merchant—amiable, intelligent, of correct habits, and engaged in lucrative and successful business. The sun of present and prospective joy, beamed brightly on the morning of their nuptials. Every thing was cheerful and tasteful in the happy home, where their youthful affections were first cemented. A few years of untroubled prosperity glided swiftly away.

Behind the counter of this young man's store, were ranged several puncheons of ardent spirits, for retail sale. In selling to others, he tasted himself. Gradually he acquired an appetite for strong drink—and the lapse of a very few months scattered all his property, ruined his reputation, beggared his family, and left him a ragged vagabond in the streets.

He was naturally an amiable and affectionate man—compliant, and yielding, and having in his nature but little of that sterner material which is called decision, when temptation came in its mighty power, he fell at once, and irremediably.

With such persons it is not unfrequently the case, that intoxication produces perfect phrenzy. A few glasses would perfectly craze him, and he would return at night to his home, a raging, tearing maniac. He would take the whole range of the house in his fury, and wife and children were compelled to flee, wounded and bleeding, from his terrible violence. The emaciation of utter wretchedness and despair, struck to the mother's heart. Often would she gather her little flock of children in the

corner behind her, and receive upon her own person the fearful blows which their brutal and crazed father was dealing around him.

> 'Oh, who can tell what days—what nights she spent,
> Of tideless, waveless, sailless, shoreless wo!'

In the morning, this wretched victim of rum would awake from his debauch, and, restored to his natural affection, would reflect upon his brutality in the deepest abyss of horror and remorse. He would fall upon his knees before his wife, with tears of anguish rolling down his cheeks, and implore her forgiveness; he would curse the day in which he was born; he would call himself a brute and a fiend; he would wish himself dead; he would resolve and re-resolve that he would never drink again. For a few days he would succeed in keeping himself away from temptation. But the acquired appetite would gather strength by the transient restraint. Associates would lure him into the village store; the sight of the decanters—the fumes of the spirits—the persuasions of topers would sweep away, with hurricane fury, all his resolutions. One glass would follow another, in the desperation of remorse and despair. Frenzied with the fiend-creating poison, he would return to his home and re-enact those scenes of outrage, the bare imagination of which makes humanity shudder.

Again and again his wife, in her wretchedness, went to the village groceries, and with all the eloquence of a despairing and broken-hearted mother, implored them not to sell her husband rum. She would shew them her

own wounds; she would lead to them her children, and tell the awful story of her woes. But all her entreaties were in vain. Sometimes they would refuse to sell to him. But then every toper in the village could get his pint bottle filled, and at the very door of the store, hold the bottle to the mouth of this wretched sot. Drunkards, like misery, love company. And a toper seems to be always pleased to see his fellow toper drunk. The sale of ardent spirit was free in the village, and of course there was no such thing as keeping it from one who had not mental resolution of his own to resist the temptation.

Misery is a slow and cruel murderer. But he gnawed with vulture tooth at the heart of this much injured woman, till exhausted nature sank and expired. Where that wretched father now is, whether in the grave, the almshouse, or the State prison, I know not; where those children—those wrecks of a once happy family—now are, I know not; but they are probably scattered as melancholy ruins over a tempestuous world; the daughters fondled in the embraces of a faithful mother's love, perchance in the ware-houses of infamy—the sons, inheriting their father's appetite, and discouraged by his disgrace, and lured by his example, growing up in shame, and poverty, and crime—candidates for highway robbery and midnight arson, and for the pirate's deeds of deadly daring.

Now what, in the light of such facts, shall a wise community do? Shall it decide that the public good demands that this bane of all earthly happiness shall still

be freely retailed. That rum, brandy, gin and whiskey, after all the ruin they have caused, and are still causing, shall yet be sold by the quart, the pint, the half pint, the gill and the glass—alluring the young to destruction, provoking the appetite for intemperance, and holding out facilities for any poor wretch, who has but three cents in the world, to squander it for rum.

It is amazing that any one, who has the reason of a man, and the humanity of a man, can be willing to spread through our State these flood fountains of wretchedness. And can any one in *sober earnest*, say that he thinks the public good is promoted by this sale; that the cause of temperance will be promoted by having the retail traffic in rum legalized, sustained by the dignity of law.

As long as the community allows the retail traffic to exist, it will be impossible to prevent the frequent repetition, of such scenes of wo and ruin as I have just described. What can persuasion do, when temptation encounters the excited appetite of the drunkard? You may as well beseech Mount Etna to smother its fires.

Suppose on the other hand, the voice of the community had twenty years ago forbidden the retail of this article—suppose the present license law had been during that time in peaceful operation. Would not this family have been saved, and saved with a great salvation? The retailing of ardent spirits caused their ruin. The prohibition of this retail, would have ensured their safety, and they would probably have been at this moment blest and

happy, in all the domestic enjoyments of the most favored New-England home.

And think not that the case I have mentioned is a solitary one. There is hardly a village in New-England, in which its main features may not be recognized. There is hardly an observing man in the State, who cannot tell not merely one, nor two, but many a similar tale. As I allow my own mind to retrace the scenes of my parochial visitings for the last eight years, I find these awful recollections crowding upon me in troops.

And is the community to seek no redress from all these evils, that a few persons may make money in selling rum? Are we patiently to allow death and destruction thus to ravage our land, that the distiller and liquor vender may grow rich? Are our sons to be thus ruined, and our daughters to be thus exposed, and our beloved State to be enduring such calamities, that a few thousands may amass wealth, by disseminating disease and poverty through our dwellings, and paralyzing the very nerve of public industry and thrift?

For be it remembered that no respectable man now pretends, that the use of rum, brandy, gin and whiskey, as a drink, does any one any good, but on the contrary, only injury. This is almost the unanimous decision of the most eminent physicians of this country and of Europe—confirmed by past experience and every day's observation. Alcohol may occasionally be needed as a medicine, and as such it may be found on the shelves of the apothecary.

And now is it *possible* that any one can seriously say, that the *public good* demands that the retail of this poverty-engendering, misery-making liquor, should be legalized ?—that the public good demands, that energy and influence should be given, to the most fell destroyer of the public good ?

On the contrary, is it not as clear as truth, that the present license law, prohibiting the retail of the article, is framed in mercy ? Is it not most manifestly promotive of the best interests of the community ? Does it not already make the widow's heart leap for joy, and cause the orphans to rise up and call down blessings upon its makers ? If there ever were a question upon which there was a right and a wrong, which could be seen and felt, *it is this.*

It is stated that among the petitions which were pourin upon our Legislature last winter, in favor of the prohibition of the retail traffic in ardent spirits, there was one signed by a number of *unhappy inebriates*, who implored protection from the strong, and to them, resistless temptation to which they were exposed. Notwithstanding all the resolution they could summon to their aid, notwithstanding the ruin of their own reputation, the disgrace of their families, and their prospective beggary, when business called them to the grocery or the tavern, where the air itself was impregnated with the fumes of alcohol, the power of appetite was so intensely stimulated within them, that they could not resist; and they implored the legislature to bring in to them the protection of

law, that they might pass safely through the village streets, unexposed to the contagion of this most deadly plague. It is an affecting fact, that there are thousands of these unhappy men, who have awoke to the consciousness that they are drunkards—having been gradually and imperceptibly led to their ruin by the bar room and the grog shop meeting them at every turn, and who are now struggling in the most desperate, yet unavailing efforts, to escape from the passions by which they are completely and most treacherously ensnared;—and they—*they*, with palsied limb, and blood-shot eye, and bloated cheek, beseech us that the bar room may be shut up, and the grog shop closed;—and their wasted wives, haggard with wo, and wan with despair, still more earnestly beg and pray, that protective law may come to their rescue; and their famished children, in rags and wretchedness, ashamed of their fathers, and inheriting disgrace, cry to the State to pity and to help them in their dreadful orphanage;—and when the State, in its paternal mercy, stretches out its arm to protect the helpless and the lost; when it would gather them under the shadow of its wing—a voice of remonstrance comes from the liquor venders of the land, declaring that the cause of temperance requires, that these grog shops should be well replenished with rum; and that the public good demands that brandy, and gin, and whiskey, should gush forth in unfailing fountains from these bar rooms!

Not long since, I called upon a young man, a parishioner of mine, the husband of a good wife, and the father

of two interesting children. Finding him in the field at work, for he was a farmer, I walked out into the corn-field, and entered into conversation with him. In the course of conversation, he remarked, 'Why, yes sir, I have every thing pleasant around me here. I have a good wife; healthy and interesting children; a very fine farm, and I do not owe a dollar in the world, but—' he continued, and his lip trembled, and he struck his hoe spasmodically into the earth, '*I am becoming a drunkard.*'

Said he, as we continued the conversation, 'I have gradually and insensibly acquired so strong an appetite for ardent spirits, that when temptation comes, as it does every time that I go to market, I am utterly unable to withstand.' Said he, 'I see perfectly to what this habit is leading me, and I am as wretched as a man can be; I shall probably soon come home a staggering drunkard, and break the heart, and perhaps personally abuse my innocent wife—beggar my children, become a disgrace to myself and all my friends, till we finally all become the miserable inmates of the poor house. I foresee it all,' said he, 'and yet whenever I go to the store and see others drink, and am invited and urged by them to partake, I have no power to resist:' and he covered his face with his hands, and wept like a sobbing child.

I endeavored to lead him to look to God for strength; to make it his daily prayer at the family altar, and in secret, that God would aid him to overcome temptation. 'Come,' said he, 'go to the house and pray for me.' We

went to the house. He called his wife and his little ones, and the mother of his wife who lived with them, and was dependent upon them together, and we kneeled around the kitchen hearth in prayer for that mental strength so fearfully needed.

A month or two passed away, I occasionally hearing that he was continuing the downward path, till I was unexpectedly called to his house to attend the funeral of his wife, who had died of a sudden fever, probably aggravated by the apprehension of the woes before them. As I observed in his flushed countenance the evidences of entire self-abandonment and despair, I could not refrain from feeling that it would have been a mercy if his children had also been lying in the coffin with their mother.

A day or two after the funeral I visited him, and we conversed freely upon what he called his approaching and inevitable ruin. And as I spoke of his motherless babes, and the new responsibilities now devolving upon him, he said, 'Sometimes I am able for a week or a fortnight to abstain altogether. I do not allow myself to keep a drop in my house. But I am compelled occasionally to go to market, and there the very breath of those I meet, fans into a flame the appetite which consumes me; the very sight and smell maddens me; the persuasions of those who are drinking finishes the temptation, and I am gone.'

A few months passed away, and I was suddenly sent for, one bright summer's afternoon, to visit him, for he was sick. I rode out to his farm, for he lived two or three miles from my own house, and found him in all the

horrors of the delirium tremens. Did you ever see a person in the delirium tremens? If not, God grant that you never may.

A few more months passed away, and I learned that he had abandoned his quiet farm, and entered into the trade in horses, and that under the influence of ardent spirits, he was making very foolish bargains, and was fast losing all his property.

A few months since as I accidentally took up a newspaper, I saw the record of his death, at the age, I believe, of thirty-two.

And here we see the legitimate effects of filling our village stores and our country bar rooms with rum. How many are there at this moment, who are going to ruin as miserably, and as surely as did this unhappy man. Oh, how far and wide are the rum selling shops and taverns spreading this woe and death. And when the legislature decides that this ruin must be arrested; that this fiend-like traffic shall no longer be allowed, men, professing to be respectable and philanthropic, rise up among us and say that the cause of temperance and human happiness demands that the tavern and the grog shop must still be well replenished with rum, and they will ransack the alleys of the city, and the hedges of the country, to obtain a force with which indignantly to repeal, that law of prohibition, which the State in its parental solicitude and compassion has so mercifully enacted. Oh, where has mercy fled, that men can now with all the light of the present day, vote to perpetuate the retail sale of rum.

Not long since I was conversing with a woman who had thrown herself from a wharf in Boston, in the attempt to destroy herself, but was taken from the water when nearly drowned, and animation restored. "Oh," said she, "wicked wretch that I was, I tried to drown myself, I knew it was wrong; but I was so unhappy that I could not longer endure life. My husband had become a drunkard, and I and the children were beggars."

And yet there are those who say that that article must be freely furnished, which has made her house a hell. Do you deem this a harsh expression? O could you see this poor woman, and hear her tell the story of her suffering life, you would think no expression could be too severe.

But when I allow my mind to revisit these scenes of penury, of weeping and of wo, I know not where to stop. They come crowding upon me in melancholy multitudes demanding recital. They seem to stand in pallid throngs at my elbow, and implore me to tell the story of their wrongs and to plead their cause.

My respected hearers, can there be a question of the propriety and the expediency of prohibiting by law the retail traffic in ardent spirits? Can there be a doubt, that the shutting up the grog shops and the bar rooms of Massachusetts, will promote the happiness and the prosperity of our State. Could we bring before you in mournful array the wives and the children of the intemperate, how earnestly, how pathetically, how eloquently in their wo, would they implore you to sustain the new license law.

There is one loud united prayer coming up to us from every portion of our land, from women and from children, from the widow and the orphan, from the weeping wife of the rich inebriate, and from the miserable tenant of the drunkard's hovel, imploring us to protect their families from the ravages of rum. The prayer of the intelligent and the pious, comes in harmony with the petition even of the drunkard, that these fountains of resistless temptation and misery may be closed. Our last legislature could not harden their hearts against these awful facts and affecting appeals. By an overwhelming majority they voted to stop the retailing of rum.

And now the question is, shall this law be sustained, or repealed?

Whatever influence we exert on earth we must soon answer for at the judgment seat of the common father of us all. Think of your feelings on a dying bed. What will be your emotions then, if you are constrained to reflect, that your vote and influence has aided to unseal the fountains of intemperance, to spread poverty and multiply crime; to press from woman's eyes tears of agony, and to make to many a family, existence on earth, an awful curse; what will be your feelings, if, when the things of earth are receding from you, and eternal things are opening to your view, conscience is tormented with the reflection that you have introduced woes to the world, which will be deepening and extending long after you have gone to your dread account?

And will it not, on the other hand, be a pleasing reflection, that you have done what you could for suffering humanity? Will it not soften your dying pillow, and infuse peace into that hour, to reflect that the blessing of the widow and the orphan rests upon you, and that you have aided in staying the most deadly plague, that ever afflicted mankind?

Price, 6¼ cents, single; 50 cts. per dozen; $3.50 per hundred.